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SUBJECT: CHAD: FOREIGN MINISTER CLARIFICATION ON REFUGEES

REF: NDJAMENA 541

¶1. (SBU) In a meeting April 17 with the Ambassador principally addressing political blockage in Chad (septel), Foreign Minister Ahmad Allam-mi provided clarification on Chad's announcement April 15 (reftel) that the international community had until the end of June to find a solution to the conflict in Darfur, otherwise it would have to find other countries to welcome the Darfur refugees.

¶2. (SBU) Allam-mi said that Chad had not meant to suggest that the refugees would be expelled to Sudan. Chad would not expel the refugees anywhere, but it might be necessary for the international community to find other countries willing to receive the refugees because it was becoming increasingly difficult for Chad, unaided, to protect the refugees. It was becoming difficult for Chad even to assure the security of its own citizens along the border, who were now subject to constant attacks by the janjaweed. It was possible that Sudan's minions would attack the camps, in search of Sudanese rebels. Tamars and Arabs in Darfur were being recruited to combat the Zaghawas. With the increasing instability in the area of the refugee camps, humanitarian workers had begun leaving at the first sign of trouble. Chad had its obligations in reference to the refugees, but the international community also had its obligations. It was essential rapidly to put a UN force on the border, but initiatives by the UN were repeatedly undermined by the attitude of the Chinese.

¶3. (SBU) The Ambassador asked whether the government intended to make this clarification public, to which Allam-mi gave no reply, except to say he was providing various interlocutors with the same message. He said that the government's announcement had been necessary to wake up the international community, which had not grasped the gravity of the peril facing Chad and the refugees. The Ambassador said it was hardly appropriate to speak of inattention, when the United States had provided millions of dollars worth of assistance for the refugee camps and eastern Chad. Allam-mi said that the issue was lack of understanding of the security threat.

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